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ABSTRACT

A decline in government funding for recreational services has stimulated the growth of private and commercial recreation. In this two-page information review, areas in which job opportunities in the recreational field are to be found are discussed, and trends in commercial recreation are listed. A list of 22 resource organizations and 6 periodicals on recreation, as well as 11 references, is included. (JD)

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Fact Sheet

CAREERS IN COMMENCIAL AND PRIVATE RECREATION

by Laurie Priest and Liane Summerfield

The past 50 years have seen tremendous growth in parks and recreation and in the corresponding education field. In 1940, 10 universities had undergraduate majors in recreation and parks. This number grew to 261 by 1970 (Kando, p. 134) and continued to increase to 494 in 1980 (AAHPERD 1980). In 1975, it was estimated that 35,000 undergraduates studied recreation and parks in U.S. colleges and universities (Kando, p. 134).

Before the '70s, recreation and park graduates looked to the public sector for jobs--in local park and recreation departments, in state agencies, and in the federal sector. However, increasing competition for funds among government agencies at all levels, coupled with citizen resistance to tax increases, has led to the declining priority of recreation and park services, with a subsequent decline in public sector jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics noted, with regard to the public sector, "The job outlook for group recreation workers is largely dependent on government funding for recreation services. In recent years, austerity budgets have been adopted by governments at all levels--a situation which is likely to continue" ("The Third Nationwide," p. 123).

The above trends have stimulated the growth of private and commercial recreation, which is characterized by a profit orientation. The private sector provides approximately 5 million jobs, compared to 363,000 public sector recreation jobs (U.S. Dept. of Interior, p. 283). Employment growth in amusement and recreation services was more than three times the average for all U.S. industry during 1972-77 (U.S. Dept. of Labor 1978, p. 160), and it is forecast that there will be a growth of 1,010,000 jobs in amusement and recreation services by 1990 ("Service Industries," p. 80). Job opportunities are expected to be more favorable for commercial recreation than public recreation through the 1980s (U.S. Dept. of Labor 1982, p. 123) and in direct contrast to the 1960s, the recreation graduate of the '80s will probably get his or her first job in a commercial setting. Private and commercial recreation is a field noted for its diversity.

"The U.S. Office of Education, in development of a career cluster concept, may have pointed a way to conceptualizing the future of recreation and leisure" (Groves, p. 45). The Office of Education has broken the field into seven subclusters that provide numerous career opportunities:

- Lodging--Management, operation, and programming for housing services such as hotels, motels, resorts, convention centers, cruise lines, and camps.
- Recreation--Planning, management, and operation of recreational programs, facilities, and areas for such agencies as commercial/private, governmental, volunteer, industrial, outdoor, and therapeutic institutions.
- Entertainment Services--Management, operation, and programming for entertainment services such as theaters, theme parks, race-tracks, and night clubs, and toy and game manufacturers.
- Cultural Services--Management, operation, and programming for institutions that deal with the fine arts such as museums, zoos, aquariums, and historical sites.
- Sports--The management, operation, and programming for athletic areas and facilities such as racquetball and tennis complexes, health and fitness clubs, and professional athletic organizations.
- Food and Beverage Services--Management and operation of food establishments such as restaurants, school cafeterias, snack bars, and catering services.
- Travel Services--Management, operation, and programming for tourist organizations such as travel agencies, tours, and chambers of commerce.

Students contemplating careers in commercial recreation are likely to encounter one or more of the following trends.

- Many commercial recreation businesses are family owned and operated, which limits the number of jobs available. This is particularly true for campgrounds, small hotels, and small amusement parks.
- Many employers are not aware of the availability of a recreation degree and the skills possessed by a commercial recreation graduate.

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- Commercial recreation careers require business skills, and not all recreation curricula require business courses.
- Many commercial recreation positions are entry level, and the pay is correspondingly low. However, once on the "inside," the likelihood of promotion is high.
- Many commercial recreation jobs are seasonal and part-time, and thus not attractive to recreation graduates.
- No one overall organization exists in commercial recreation to serve as a clearinghouse for jobs.

RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

- American Association for Leisure and Recreation, 1900 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091
- American Association of Fitness Directors in Business and Industry, c/o Pepsico, Anderson Hill Rd., Purchase, NY 10577
- American Camping Association, Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN 46151
- American Society of Travel Agents, 711 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10022
- Archery Lane Operators Association, 2151 N. Hamline Ave., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55113
- Association of Physical Fitness Centers, 5272 River Rd., Bethesda, MD 20816
- Bowling Proprietors Association of America, Box 5802, Arlington, TX 76011
- Club Managers Association of America, 7615 Winterberry Place, Bethesda, MD 20817
- Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, 1617 St. Andrews Dr., Lawrence, KS 66044
- International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, Suite 303, 7222 W. Cermak Rd., North Riverside, IL 60546
- International Racquet Sports Association, 10 Concord Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138
- National Campground Owners Association, Suite 100, 2401 Blueridge Ave., Wheaton, MD 20902
- National Camping Association, 353 W. 56th St., New York, NY 10019
- National Employee Services and Recreation Association, 20 N. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL 60606
- National Forest Recreation Association, Suite 45, 2524 S. El Paradiso, Mesa, AZ 85202
- National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Interior Building, Rm. 2328, 18th and C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240
- National Recreation and Park Association, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302
- National Swimming Pool Institute, 2000 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20006
- Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, 14650 Lee Rd., Chantilly, VA 22021
- Roller Skating Rink Operators Association, P.O. Box 81846, Lincoln, NE 68501
- YMCA, 291 Broadway, New York, NY 10007
- YWCA, 600 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10002

PERIODICALS AVAILABLE

- Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 1900 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091
- Parks and Recreation, National Recreation and Parks Association, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302
- Parks and Recreation Resources, 5848 Smithfield, East Lansing, MI 48823
- Recreation Management, NESRA, 20 N. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL 60606
- Resort Management, P.O. Box 40169, 1509 Madison Ave., Memphis, TN 38104
- Ski Area Management, Drawer D, North Salem, NY 10560

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U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment and Earnings. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 19 January 1978, pp. 140-1.

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